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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the Behaviorally Anchored Supervision System (BASS), an approach to supervision in special education based on the definition of effective instruction developed by the Council for Exceptional Children in 1986. A comprehensive model for excellence in special education is based upon the following four elements: values, organization/structure, tools, and support. Values must focus on each student. Suggested questions to guide the structure of effective programs are outlined. Tools are abstracted from the literature on effective schools and pinpoint effective classroom characteristics and practices, school characteristics and practices, and district characteristics and practices. Support must be attitudinal, structural, and supervisory. The special education supervisor fulfills five roles: advocate, facilitator/trainer, policymaker, monitor/evaluator, and program manager. The supervisor must have competencies in the areas of interpersonal relations, knowledge base, modeling, inservice, and facilitation. The BASS supervision system has content based on sound teaching principles, a format which allows for feedback, and a process which ensures fairness. The BASS process consists of eight steps in four phases: (1) preparation, (2) data collection, (3) data analysis and synthesis, and (4) interpretation of data for teacher improvement. (DB)

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EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR SUPERVISORS: BEHAVIORALLY ANCHORED SURPERVISION SYSTEM

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Supervisors in special education are faced with a maddening array of responsibilities. Not only must every IEP be signed, sealed, and delivered, but every parent must be pleased and every staff member must be satisfied. How one finds time to properly supervise staff is miracle enough. Having found time, deciding what to supervise and how to supervise are significant challenges.

CEC developed a sound comprehensive definition of effective instruction in 1986 (CEC, 1986). Stevan Kukic and Susan Fister used curriculum derived from the CEC definition and developed a supervision system which endeavors specifically, with reliability and with validity, to measure and support teacher effectiveness in special education.

As a prelude to the description included herein on the Behaviorally Anchored Supervision System (BASS) (CEC, 1988), the following endeavors to provide context for the uses of BASS.

Elements For Excellence

In 1987, Kukic (1987) suggested four elements which, taken together, comprise a comprehensive model for excellence in special education. The four elements are values, organization/structure, tools, and support.

1. **Values.** All decisions are value laden. The philosophy of the School for All (CPPESH, 1988) is anchored by values related to inclusion, community based programming, and right of each individual to have the opportunity for maximum inclusion into society at large. In stark contrast, the report of the Commission on the Education of the Deaf (COED, 1988) suggests that values related to appropriate education for students with hearing impairments include the need for interaction and friendships with others in the deaf community, which might well occur most effectively in residential settings. Clearly, values must be articulated and must provide the foundation for the development of excellence in special education.

   Deal and Kennedy (1982) provided a five component definition of corporate culture. The five components - external environment, values, cultural heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural network - must be fully addressed if a "Corporation" is to be productive. In their discussion of values, Deal and Kennedy promote the idea of developing a limited number of core values to direct corporate thinking. This idea is exemplified by the slogan of the Utah Federation of CEC: "The focus is each student." This slogan is currently being used as the basis for reform activities across the state of Utah.

2. **Organization/Structure.** While each of the elements for excellence is essential, none is sufficient by itself if a system is to achieve effectiveness. Slogans are not useful unless they serve to promote the development of comprehensive structures for planning, delivering, and evaluating services to students with handicaps.

One such structure has been developed by the Utah Special Education Consortium (Utah Consortium, 1987). The Utah Special Education Evaluation System (SEES) defines in detail the characteristics of an effective special education program. SEES is organized around five basic questions. They are:

1.0 Is each student achieving appropriate outcomes?

2.0 Are special education staff using effective pedagogy?

3.0 Are identification and placement procedures facilitative of student growth and consistent with applicable regulations?

4.0 Are instructional program coordination practices effective?

5.0 Are community communication and involvement practices effective?

For each of these questions, a set of subquestions has been developed which detail what must be addressed in order to achieve an effective program. Given the intent of this paper, question 2 subquestions will be presented as a basis for further discussion of teacher effectiveness.

2.1 Does the special educator develop learning activities which take into account mastery of the prerequisite skills?

2.2 Does the special educator communicate learning outcomes to the student consistent with objectives stated on the IEP?

2.3 Does the special educator follow through with the appropriate use of positive and negative consequences for classroom behavior?

2.4 Does the special educator use validated instructional techniques that facilitate the accomplishment of the assigned learning outcome?

2.5 Does the special educator provide frequent opportunities for students to be engaged in the instructional activity?

2.6 Does the special educator provide corrections for incorrect student responses to instruction?

2.7 Does the special educator insure a minimum of wasted time during instruction, independent work, or transitions from one activity to the other?

2.8 Does the special educator provide appropriate positive reinforcement for correct student responses to instruction?

2.9 Does the special educator use instructional media/materials that are relevant to the objectives being taught?

2.10 Does the special educator use direct measurement procedures to monitor student progress and make appropriate adjustments in instructional activities?

2.11 Does the special educator demonstrate personal enthusiasm and a positive attitude toward students and subject matter taught?

These subquestions present a structure for a definition of teacher effectiveness. One challenge is to determine how to support teachers to use effective pedagogy. Defining the structure for such a concept is essential, but not sufficient.

3. **Tools**. In addition to the need to develop comprehensive organization and structure based on strongly held, publicly stated values, it is necessary to provide tools for all involved which allow staff, parents, and students to realize the potential of the special education service system. These tools must be validated, comprehensive, relevant, and practical.

The effective schools literature (NWREL, 1986) provides a basis for selecting essential tools. This research literature identifies characteristics which promote student achievement at the classroom, school, and district level. It might be accurate to suggest that to date, special education has not comprehensively integrated the effective schools literature into practice (Morsink, Soar, Soar, and Thomas, 1986). However, the Council for Exceptional Children has integrated this research base into a series of Academies which provide useful, data based training for teachers and supervisors in special education (CEC, 1986; CEC, 1988).

CEC has used the effective schools literature as a base for all its Academies. This literature suggests the following characteristics which are supportive of student achievement:

Effective Schooling Practices

A. Classroom Characteristics and Practices

1. Instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum.
2. There are high expectations for student learning.
3. Students are carefully oriented to lessons.
4. Instruction is clear and focused.
5. Learning progress is monitored closely.
6. When students don't understand, they are retaught.
7. Class time is used for learning.
8. There are smooth efficient classroom routines.
9. Instructional groups formed in the classroom fit instructional needs.
10. Standards for classroom behavior are explicit.
11. Personal interactions between teachers and students are explicit.
12. Incentives and rewards for students are used to promote excellence.

B. School Characteristics and Practices

1. Everyone emphasizes the importance of learning.
2. Strong leadership guides the instructional program.
3. The curriculum is based on clear goals and objectives.
4. Students are grouped to promote effective instruction.
5. School time is used for learning.
6. Learning progress is monitored closely.
7. Discipline is firm and consistent.
8. There are high expectations for quality instruction.
9. Incentives and rewards are used to build strong motivation.
10. Parents are invited to become involved.
11. Teachers and administrators continually strive to improve instructional effectiveness.
12. There are pleasant conditions for learning.

C. District Characteristics and Practices

1. High expectations pervade the organization.
2. There are policies and procedures that support excellence in student performance.
3. Student learning is checked regularly.
4. Improvement efforts are monitored and supported.
5. Excellence is recognized and rewarded.
6. Curriculum planning ensures continuity.

(NWREL, 1986)

CEC developed its definition of effective instruction and supervision from this background. CEC suggested that there are three student variables which are the major predictors of academic achievement: academic learning time, level of success, and content coverage. In addition, CEC has developed detailed training packages related to the structure of the lesson and critical presentation skills. Again, these packages use the effective schools literature as a basis. (Several other Academies have been developed which continue this strategy. Contact CEC for more information.)

Even tools as well developed as the CEC Academies on Effective Instruction require support if they are to realize the potential of improving the educational lives of students with handicaps. Support is the fourth element for excellence.

4. **Support**. Special education has a legal and sophisticated structure for service, based on a student-centered set of values. Validated tools like the CEC Academies provide the stimuli for real program improvement. However, without ongoing support, excellence will never be achieved.

Three levels of support are needed - attitudinal, structural, and supervisory. Attitudinally, staff must internalize the notion that teams make decisions in special education. The legal mandate only reinforces a best practice notion that careful attention to teamwork at all levels, at all times, can improve services to students with handicaps.

Structurally, models like the teacher (or school-wide) assistance team (Chalfant et al., 1979 and Project RIDE, 1988) suggest ongoing, school-wide mechanisms for problem solving. These models ensure the responsive availability of faculty support for student problems.

Finally, the role of the special education supervisor must be considered. The supervisor has a myriad of responsibilities in most systems. In 1979, Burrello and Sage suggested five roles of effective special education leadership. The following outline describes these five roles.

I. **Advocate**

A. Focus is on guaranteeing rights and due process.
B. Belief is held that all students can learn and that the school makes the difference between success and failure.

II. **Facilitator/Trainer**

A. Validated practices are promoted; teaching and learning principles are applied.
B. Current research is communicated and used to facilitate problem solving.
C. Effective teaching practices are modeled for staff as appropriate.
D. Teacher supervision focuses on instructional improvement; staff development opportunities are secured and monitored; staff are supported.

III. **Policymaker**

A. Focus is on IEP planning, consensus building, and conflict resolution.
B. Expectations for curriculum quality are set through the use of standards and guidelines; alignment is checked; priorities are established.
C. Systems of incentives and rewards are planned to encourage excellence in student and teacher performance.
D. Staff are instructed to meet high instructional standards; agreement on school-wide instructional model is obtained.
E. Staff and others are involved in planning and implementation strategies.

IV. **Monitor/Evaluator**

A. Student progress is checked frequently; performance data are made visible; progress standards are set.
B. Classroom visits to observe instruction are frequent; supervision focuses on instructional improvement.
C. Staff development opportunities are secured and monitored.
D. Implementation of policies and procedures are monitored.

V. **Program Manager**

A. Staff is supervised.
B. Budgets are overseen.
C. Funds are administered on a day-to-day basis.
D. All levels of the district organization are interfaced.
E. Reports are made.
F. Due process procedures are coordinated.

The challenges are obvious and many. One significant challenge concerns supervision related to overall leadership. Determining how to give sufficient attention to facilitation and training while maintaining the other four roles is tremendously difficult. Realities related to compliance monitoring and program management daily test energy for other activities. Supporting staff while simultaneously focusing on student-centered service provision seem at times contradictory, conceptually and programatically. It is suggested that support is needed for supervisors for skill development related to supervisory components and to the supervision act specifically.

Supervision - Foundation and Processes. There are scores of definitions of effective supervision available today. In developing the curriculum for the CEC Academy on Effective Supervision, Kukic and Fister (CEC, 1988) chose to focus on a five component model of supervision (Utah Learning Resource Center, 1986). In the opinion of the CEC Academy authors, it seems that the skills required of the effective supervisor mirror those required of the effective mentor (or consulting) teacher. The model contained herein reflects foundation and process competencies of the effective supervisor. The foundation competencies are interpersonal relationships and knowledge base. The process competencies are modeling, inservice, and facilitation. The outline which follows provides elaboration of these five components.

I. **Interpersonal Relations**

- A. Develops and maintains constructive relationships with all staff which are characterized by confident and competent application of verbal, non-verbal, listening, and feedback techniques.
- B. Effectively assists others to gain these skills through modeling, inservice, and facilitation.

II. **Knowledge Base**

- A. Upon request, shares with all teachers two or more alternative strategies for each concern expressed. The strategies should be validated, relevant, practical, and comprehensive.
- B. Keeps current with and applies new developments in program planning, implementation, evaluation, consultation, and general education.
- C. Assists others to stay abreast of current developments.

III. **Modeling**

- A. With competence and confidence, demonstrates personally (or provides demonstrations) with students and/or peers all strategies recommended by BASS.
- B. Assists others to gain skills in modeling.

IV. **Inservice**

A. Upon request, provides responsive and comprehensive inservice to meet the individual needs of most teachers.
B. Assists others to gain skills through inservice.

V. **Facilitation**

A. Makes competent and confident use of skills in problem solving, counseling, interpersonal relations, and content to encourage growth in teachers skills to resolve future, similar concerns.
B. Assists others to gain skills in facilitation.

With this model for supervision, the context for the development of a comprehensive, practical, relevant and valid supervision system is in place. The rest of this paper will describe the content and process of one such model - the Behaviorally Anchored Supervision System (BASS).

BASS

To be effective, a supervision system must have content which is based on sound teaching principles, a format which allows for feedback for improvement, and a process which ensures fairness. BASS has all three of these characteristics.

Content

The content of BASS is based on the CEC definition of effective instruction. In fact, BASS is intended to be a precise reflection of Academy content. BASS contains areas for supervision which are organized around the key components of effective teaching, the structure of the lesson, critical presentation skills, and managing independent work. Thus, BASS provides a supervision system which is targeted to a full-blown inservice strategy designed to promote effective instruction in special education.

Format

The format of BASS is called the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (Schwab, Henneman, and DeCotiis, 1975). A behaviorally anchored rating scale is a rating scale which contains specific behavioral statements which correspond to levels of effectiveness. These behavioral "anchors" are uniquely defined for each area to be supervised. What follows is a sample page from BASS (Table 1).

Please notice that the five behavioral anchors specify five levels of effectiveness. The "C" statement describes best performance of this scale. The "I" statement specifies minimal effectiveness. The "D" statement describes worst performance. The "H" and "L" statements are included to allow for feedback and counseling related to incremental steps for improvement.

Use of this format minimizes the subjectivity which inevitably pervades the supervision act. In addition, this format provides built-in goals for improvement. This format succeeds only if BASS is used consistently and fairly. The BASS process is designed to ensure the success of the supervision act.

KEY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Scale 1: ACADEMIC LEARNING TIME

C. Provides frequent and ongoing opportunities for all students to be involved/engaged in group and individual activities.

H. Provides frequent and ongoing opportunities for most students to be involved/engaged in group and individual activities.

I. Provides frequent and ongoing opportunities for most students to be involved/engaged in groups.

L. Provides frequent and ongoing opportunities for some students to be involved/engaged in groups.

D. Provides little or no opportunity for student involvement/engagement.

INDICATORS

-proportion of time students are on task
-questions
-individual and choral responses
-extensions of learning
-teacher reaction to student idleness
-type/appropriateness of seatwork assignments
-frequency of distractions
-control over distractions

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this implementation guide is to facilitate the use of the Behaviorally Anchored Supervision System (BASS).

The Implementation Guide is organized around the BASS process. Table 1 outlines this process. Subsequent handouts detail each process phase.

TABLE 1

BASS PROCESS

PHASE I Preparation	1.	Schedule observation for evaluation of effective instruction.
	2.	Collect pre-observation information from the teacher. (5 min. for steps 1 & 2)
PHASE II Data Collection	3.	Collect data through observation. (Some combination of scales 1-20 (30 min.).
	4.	Clarify observation data. (5 min.)
PHASE III Data Analysis and Synthesis	5.	Apply data to BASS rating scales. (20 min.)
	6.	Develop a profile of teacher effectiveness. (5 min.)
PHASE IV Interpretation of data for teacher improvement	7.	Conduct post-observation counseling conference. (30 min.)
	8.	Set goals. (10 min.)

PHASE I

PREPARATION

Step 1 - SCHEDULE OBSERVATION FOR EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

Schedule observation at the preference of the teacher.

Teacher can feel confident that data collection will occur at a time which will maximize chances for best performance.

Anxiety is minimized using this strategy.

Step 2 - COLLECT PRE-OBSERVATION INFORMATION FROM TEACHER*

In order to set the stage for the observation, conduct a conference prior to the observation.

Schedule conference on or before the observation day.

Collect the following information from this conference:

a. IEP goals and objectives for students in the class.

b. Specific objectives for the session.

c. Lesson plans.

d. Problematic behavior patterns.

e. Where the supervisor should sit for the observation.

Collect this information using the Pre-observation Information Form.

*Pre-observation information will help the supervisor to understand educational choices observed during the session. Pre-observation conference information should not be considered data. Data are collected during the observation itself.

PHASE II
DATA COLLECTION

The most critical phase of BASS is data collection. During this phase, facts will be recorded from which conclusions about teacher performance can later be drawn. The data are recorded on the BASS Data Collection and Profile form(s).

Step 3 - COLLECT DATA THROUGH OBSERVATION

General guidelines for collection of meaningful and useful observational data.

a. Record what you see and what you hear; don't record value judgement.

b. Student reaction is more important than your reaction.

General guidelines for data collection:

a. Collect data in sufficient detail so that you can talk from them during the post-observation conference. Counseling will take place typically at a later date.

b. Be specific and factual. Do not record value judgements or inferences; just record what you see and hear.

c. Write a piece of data down once. Use all relevant data on the page to make individual scale decisions.

d. Indicate a behavior once; then use hash marks to record frequently.

e. Label and count; do not interpret.

f. If something is ambiguous during data collection, write a question and clarify the data after the observation (Step 4).

Step 4 - CLARIFY OBSERVATION DATA

Following the observation, meet briefly with the teacher (5 min.).

Ask questions to clarify any ambiguities in the data.

Formally conclude the observation session.

Record answers on the Data Collection Form.

Make no interpretation or judgments from the data.

PHASE III
DATA ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Step 5 - APPLY DATA TO BASS RATING SCALES

Following the classroom observation, compare the data collected on the Data Collection Form with the 5 statements for each of the applicable scales on the BASS Rating Instrument.

Match, as closely as possible, the written data to one of the 5 statements on rating scale.

Use only data recorded on the sheet.

Data recorded in one area may be used to support the selection of a statement in another area.

Record the letter of the behavioral statement for the appropriate category in the square for each scale in the Data Collection and Profile form.

Follow this strategy for each of the scales.

Step 6 - DEVELOP A PROFILE OF TEACHER COMPETENCE

The BASS process to this point has generated a list of up to 20 letters which correspond to "best fit" choices for the BASS scales.

Develop a profile of teacher effectiveness which compares observed teacher performance to a 5-point scale of effectiveness (e.g., 5 = Outstanding, 3 = Minimal Competence, 1 = Inadequate).

Record on the Profile.

PHASE IV
INTERPRETATION OF DATA FOR TEACHER IMPROVEMENT

Step 7 - CONDUCT POST-OBSERVATION COUNSELING CONFERENCE

Guidelines for interpretation:*

a. Summarize the Profile by reading the statements which correspond to the data points on the Profile. These are behavioral indicators of how the teacher currently is performing.

b. Review the statement for each scale which is one level higher than the statement chosen during data analysis.

c. Discuss the difference between the scale statements. This activity provides the basis for counseling for improvement. During this counseling, the teacher, with assistance from the supervisor, can determine what changes should be make if the teacher is going to improve on a specific scale. These changes can be noted on the Goal Setting Form.

*This counseling strategy focuses the teacher's attention on specific areas of teaching which need improvement. The counseling process provides the teacher with comprehensive data with which to evaluate his/her overall instructional effectiveness and make plans for improvement by setting goals.

Step 8 - SET GOAL(S)

Use situational leadership.

Determine the teacher's willingness and ability to specify goals.

Share information about goals.

a. Let teachers know how important goals are.

b. Teachers begin to own the need for goals as a means for improvement.

Use confrontation skills appropriately.

a. Help teachers understand why goals are so important.

b. May need to write goals initially and get agreement from teachers. Transition of responsibility and skill should follow a carefully designed staff development plan so that teachers can be assured of necessary materials, personnel resources, and learning activities that will help them learn how to specify goals, and will ensure their acquisition of the skills.

Give and receive further feedback regarding the development and use of the goal statement.

a. Ask for feedback on development and maintenance of skills regarding both materials and processes.

b. Give feedback when attitudes and abilities have changed and developed toward goals.

c. Make decisions about how, when (date), where, and why they must improve.

Conclusion

Effective supervision demands the integration of interpersonal skills and knowledge base with the sensitive application of modeling, inservice, and facilitation skill. The Behaviorally Anchored Supervision System provides the content, format, and process required to make supervision a truly supportive activity.

The role of special education leadership is to guide the development of excellence on behalf of students with handicaps. Acknowledgment and reliance on a set of core values provides the foundation. Development of an organization and structure which fosters excellence broadly and comprehensively is a necessary component. Valid tools must be available widely and responsively. Finally, support must be systematic and targeted to the goal of effectiveness.

BASS
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